

Teaching and Learning in a  
Networked World

# Innovative Teaching Using Wikis and Blogs

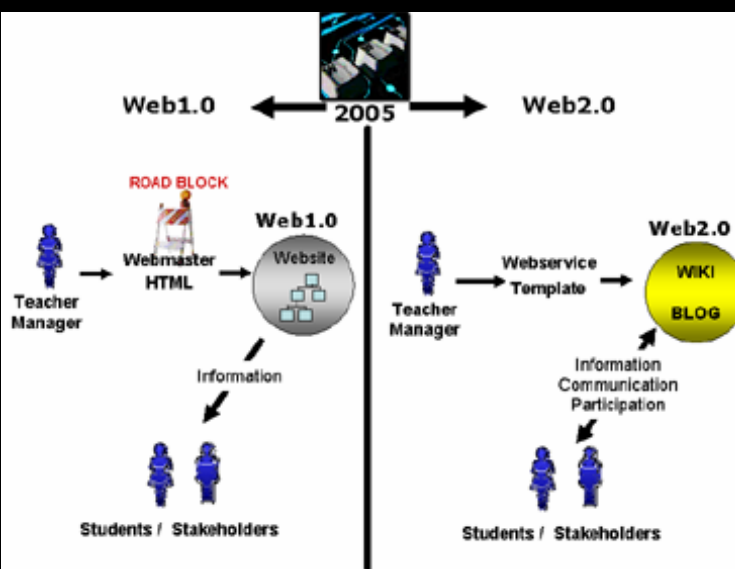
Presentation by

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Many companies have already started to use collaborative Wikis, which allow employees to freely edit ongoing projects. This will increasingly become the norm. *ZDNet Asia, August 2006*

You cannot afford to close your eyes to blogs, because they're simply the most explosive outbreak in the information world since the Internet itself. And they're going to shake up just about every business. Blogs are a phenomenon that you cannot ignore. *Business Week, May 2005*

As more businesses adopt wikis and blogs  
for collaboration and information, students will need  
to be well prepared to use them in their careers.



Until recently the world wide web has been a publishing medium. It is now regarded more as a participatory platform based on the use of social software such as blogs and wikis. *Social software* is a second generation of web services e.g. wikis and blogs, that lets people collaborate and share information online.

## Why use Wiki in education?

A Wiki can be thought of as a combination of a Web site and a Word document. At its simplest, it can be read just like any other web site, with no access privileges necessary, but its real power lies in the fact that groups can collaboratively work on the content of the site using nothing but a standard web browser. Beyond this ease of editing, the second powerful element of a wiki is its ability to keep track of the history of a document as it is revised. Since users come to one place to edit, the need to keep track of Word files and compile edits is eliminated. Each time a person makes changes to a wiki page, that revision of the content becomes the current version, and an older version is stored. Versions of the document can be compared side-by-side, and edits can be “rolled back” if necessary.

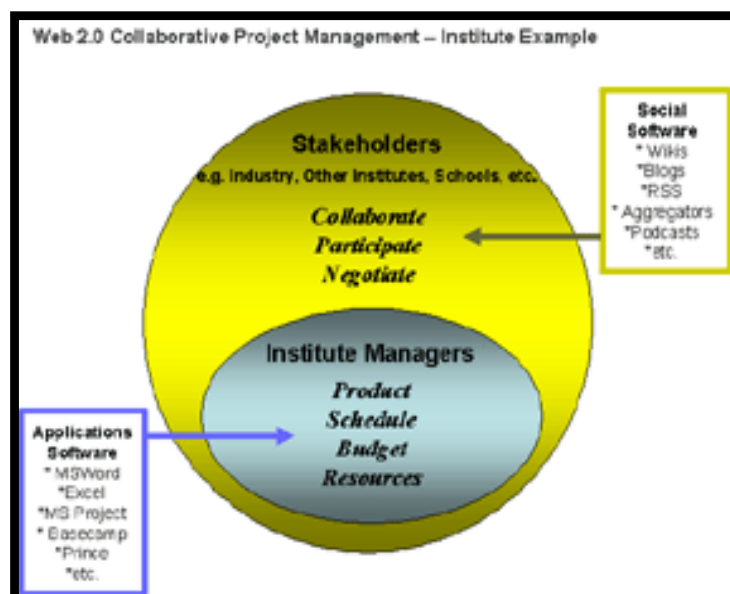
The Wiki is now accepted in education, as an ideal tool for the increasing amount of collaborative work done by both students and teachers. Students might use a wiki to collaborate on a group report, compile data or share the results of their research, while teachers might use the wiki to collaboratively author the structure and curriculum of a course, and the wiki can then serve as part of each person’s course web site.

## Ways to use Wiki in Education

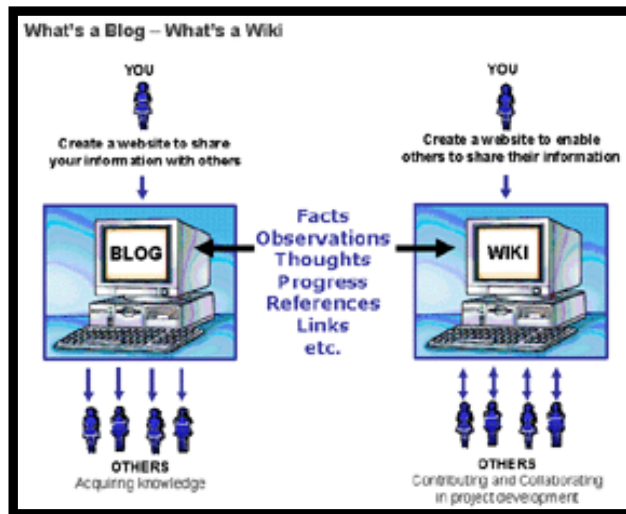
**Easily create simple websites** Typically when students are asked to create web sites as part of a class project, they have to rely on the chance that someone in a group knows how to make a web site, or that some sort of training is available. The wiki eliminates both obstacles, because it provides a ready to use site with a simple user interface, ability to easily add pages, and simple navigation structure. This allows students to spend more time developing the content of the site, instead of trying to learn how to make one. As more businesses adopt the wiki for collaboration & information, students will be well prepared to use it in their careers.

### Project development with peer review

A wiki makes it easy for students to write, revise and submit an assignment, since all three activities can take place in the wiki. A student can be given a wiki page to develop a project, and might start by tracking their background research. This allows the teacher, and peers, to see what they’re using, help them if they’re off track, suggest other resources, or even get ideas based on



what others find useful. Next, the student can draft the project in the wiki, taking advantage of the wiki's automatic revision history that saves a before & after version of the document each time they makes changes. This allows the teacher and peers to see the evolution of the paper over time, and continually comment on it, rather than offering comments only on the final draft. When the student completes the final draft, the teacher and peers can read it on the wiki, and offer feedback.



**Group authoring** Often groups collaborate on a document by “pushing” it out to each member - emailing a file that each person edits on his or her computer, and some attempt is made to coordinate the edits so everyone’s work is equally represented. But what happens when two people think of the same idea and include it in different ways in their respective copies

of the file, or when one group member misses an agreed upon time to finish their changes and pass on the file to the next member? Who decides what to do? Using a wiki “pulls” the group members together to build and edit the document on a wiki page, which strengthens the community within the group, allows group members with overlapping or similar ideas to see and collaboratively build on each other’s work. It also allows all group members immediate, equal access to the most recent version of the document.

**TEACHER / MANAGER WIKI**  
What can wiki users do?

- \* View the lesson / project plan
- \* Respond to the 'To Do' list
- \* Edit content
- \* Participate in discussions/meetings
- \* Access embedded resources
- \* Access recommended WWW links
- \* Review log of all changes to wiki

**TEACHER / MANAGER BLOG**  
What can blog publishers do?

- \* Communicate with others
- \* Acquire recognition for achievements
- \* Publicise progress of projects
- \* Invite comments on projects
- \* Provide a log of progress
- \* Provide advice
- \* Reduce email

### Track a group project

Considering students’ busy schedules, a wiki is very useful for tracking and completing group projects. It allows group members to track their research and ideas from anywhere they have internet access, helps them save time by seeing what sources others have already checked, then gives them a central place to collectively prepare the final

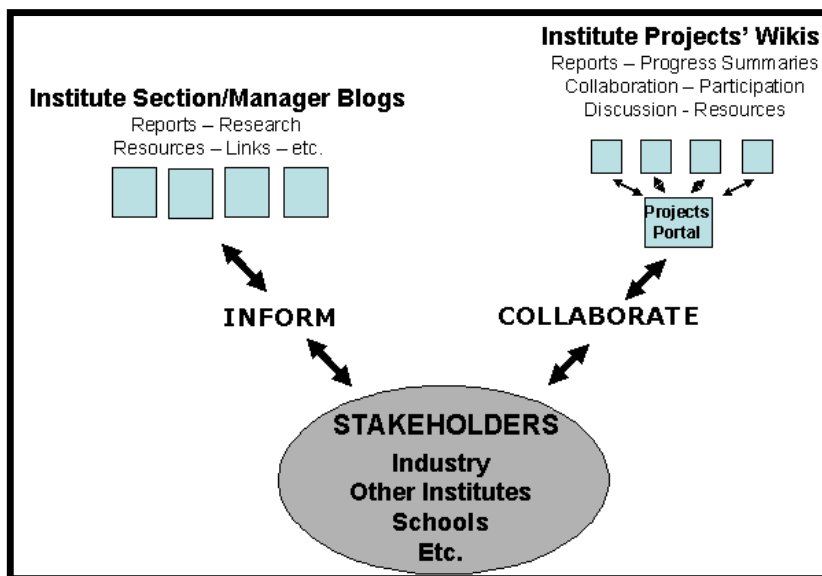
product, i.e. write and edit a group paper or prepare the content of a powerpoint or keynote presentation.

One way to do this is to give each group a wiki page in which to write the paper itself, and give each member of the group a separate page to track his/her research and ideas for the paper. The "paper" page lets you see how the group is working collaboratively to construct the paper, and the individual pages let you track how each group member is developing his/her contribution to the paper, and gives you a place to leave feedback and suggestions for each student. If you use the individual pages this way, you may want to restrict view access for each student's individual page to only you and that student.

- **Data Collection** Because of its ease of editing, a wiki can be very useful for collecting data from a group of
- **Presentations** Some people are using a wiki in place of conventional presentation software, like Keynote and PowerPoint.

## Why use blogs in education?

Blogging is increasingly finding a home in education, as not only does the software remove the technical barriers to writing and publishing online - but the 'journal' format encourages students to keep a record of their thinking over time. Blogs also of course facilitate critical feedback, by letting readers add comments - which could be from teachers, peers or a wider audience.



Students use of blogs are far ranging. A single authored blog can be used to provide a personal space online, to pose questions, publish work in progress, and link to and comment on other web sources. However a blog needn't be

limited to a single author - it can mix different kinds of voices, including fellow students, teachers and mentors, or subject specialists.

Teachers who are subject specialists are also using blogs to provide up-to-date information and commentary on their subject areas, as well as posting questions and assignments and linking to relevant news stories and websites